

***Smoking and Culture: The Archaeology of Tobacco Pipes in Eastern North America.* By Sean Rafferty and Rob Mann. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2004. Pp. xi + 324, illustrations and black/white photographs, maps, tables, notes, works cited, index, ISBN 1-57233-350-2, cloth)**

Monica Kindraka Jensen

Volume 29, numéro 1-2, 2007

Retour à l'ethnographie
Back to Ethnography

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/018761ar>
DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/018761ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Association Canadienne d'Ethnologie et de Folklore

ISSN

1481-5974 (imprimé)
1708-0401 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Jensen, M. K. (2007). Compte rendu de [*Smoking and Culture: The Archaeology of Tobacco Pipes in Eastern North America.* By Sean Rafferty and Rob Mann. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2004. Pp. xi + 324, illustrations and black/white photographs, maps, tables, notes, works cited, index, ISBN 1-57233-350-2, cloth)]. *Ethnologies*, 29(1-2), 363–365.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/018761ar>

REVIEWS / COMPTES RENDUS

Smoking and Culture: The Archaeology of Tobacco Pipes in Eastern North America. By Sean Rafferty and Rob Mann. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2004. Pp. xi + 324, illustrations and black/white photographs, maps, tables, notes, works cited, index, ISBN 1-57233-350-2, cloth)

The rather-too-serviceable title of this study does not prepare one for the riches that lie within. Introduced to the world by native North Americans, tobacco smoking and smoking pipes from 1,000 B.C. forward — specifically, tubular pipes and platform pipes made of ground stone; the elbow pipe, more associated with the modern pipe; the effigy pipe and the calumet pipe, colloquially called a peace pipe — are examined here, not as fascinating grave goods or archeological treasures, but as potential indicators of ritual and ideology. The pipes are an active expression of material culture as ideology. Regardless of one's interest in smoking pipes, *Smoking and Culture* is a compelling exploration that successfully demonstrates how studies of specific types of material culture can provide interpretive windows into a host of anthropological and ethnographic issues.

The eleven essays that comprise *Smoking and Culture* were the fruit of a symposium entitled “The Sot Weed Factor: Recent Developments in the Archaeology of Smoking Pipes” organized by the editor/authors of this volume in 2001 at the Society for American Archaeology annual meeting. The intent of the symposium and the resulting book was in part to react against the trend towards descriptive studies of smoking pipes, which have tended to focus on chronology and typology. Because, according to the authors, there has been comparatively little research into what role smoking pipes played in the societies that used them and what could be learned about culture through the study of smoking pipes, the challenge here was to address this dearth.

The authors note that the non-utilitarian functions of smoking pipes make them ideally suited for behavioral and cultural studies such as this. Smoking pipes provide information about past belief systems. Because of their association with potent narcotics and the spirit world, pipes often figured prominently in religious ceremonies; indeed they were integral tools in shamanic practices. Pipes also inform research about craft specialization, potting traditions, trade networks, and cultural change.

Broadly chronological, *Smoking and Culture* begins with two prehistoric case studies which encompass Early Woodland (circa 1,000 to 0 B.C) to Ohio Valley Adena culture (500 BC to 200 AD) and stretch from southeastern Canada to the western Ohio River valley. It then addresses the “Contact period,” examining the structure of interactions among Native Americans — with smoking pipes acting as status indicators, ritual tools and gifts; the role of pipes as ethnic markers (differentiating pipe use among Native American, European and African contexts) and as durable cultural symbols; pipes as facilitators in social interactions (the fur trade); pipes in relation to changing gender relations and ritual practices among Native Americans (the use of pipes by Native American women); and the role of symbolic iconography (owls, hawks, bears, dogs, monkeys and secondary motifs or decoration) in pipes, specifically pipes of base metals (rare specimens of lead or pewter).

During more “recent” historical times, seventeenth and eighteenth century clay-pipe making in the Netherlands, a thriving business in which pipe-making shops were set up by men and women alike, female pipe makers are shown to have manipulated the pipe-making industry as a means of empowerment. The fluid and changeable nature of ethnicity is examined in a study of clay pipes excavated from an Irish/American enclave in eighteenth and nineteenth century Paterson, New Jersey. The final two essays address methodological strategies for studying smoking pipes; that is, the potential for excavated material from contemporary sites to give archaeologists insight into earlier social life and interaction and how the usefulness of petrographic analysis — analysis of the pipe’s fabric texture (clay grain size, etc.) — facilitates the understanding of production location, technology and economic significance of, for example, red clay pipes.

Among the gems scattered throughout *Smoking and Culture*, we learn that one of the earliest known smoking pipes, recovered from a

prehistoric site of ceremonial context in Tennessee is dated approximately 2000 B.C. As for the motifs displayed on effigy pipes (scarce before 1500 and more prevalent after contact), bird effigies, especially hawks and owls, are particularly common. Researchers speculate that the bird is a shamanistic symbol because it can shift between environments or mediate between disparate states and may be linked to the experience of drug-induced (tobacco) "flight". The manufacture of white clay pipes, established in England by the 1580s, quickly spread to the Netherlands. Dutch makers' marks, such as the Tudor Rose or the fleur-de-lis, applied to pipes as signs of authorship, are feminine in iconography. We encounter the "theme" pipe known as a "Walter Raleigh," which consists of a bowl in the shape of a seventeenth century gentleman who juts out of the mouth of a crocodile, that is, the pipe's stem. Evidently, the iconography refers to a legend in which Sir Walter Raleigh (Elizabethan courtier, world-renowned for his nicotine addiction and his shameless promotion of the joys of smoking) falls overboard during a voyage of exploration to South America and is swallowed by a crocodile. Because Raleigh reeks of the stench of tobacco, the crocodile spits him out.

Of the essays in *Smoking and Culture*, some do require an insider's knowledge of terminology. "Isochrestic" is not a commonly used word in this reviewer's vocabulary. The essay about Irish/American pipe use by Reckner leans a bit heavily on combative and wearying post-modernist jargon, i.e., "symbols with contingent and contested meanings, actively structuring and structured" (243). However, the clarity and generously informative nature of the book's introduction by Rafferty and Mann gracefully weaves all of the essays into whole cloth. *Smoking and Culture* provides a useful and welcome model for an interpretive, rather than a descriptive, analysis of a specific artifact of material culture.

Monica Kindraka Jensen
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
